

Leeds Area Quaker Meeting of The Religious Society Of Friends

¹Registered Charity 1134542

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

As Quakers, we believe that everyone is equal, regardless of wealth, status or power. We value the diversity of all people and we work towards being inclusive in our language and actions.

1 POLICY

It is the policy of the Area Meeting to provide a dignified and respectful environment in which all Friends can feel comfortable in their relationships one with another.

This policy explains how we will ensure that instances of harassment and bullying are minimised; and how we will deal with such instances if they occur.

The policy applies anywhere on or off the Area Meeting's premises where contact between Friends occurs which can be perceived as related to activities and relationships arising from being a part of the community of Friends within the Area Meeting. It can occur in person, in writing or via electronic means including emails, texts, online messaging services or social media.

2 WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

We define harassment as behaviour connected to what is termed a 'protected characteristic'. The protected characteristics are: age; race (including colour and ethnic/national origin); disability; religion or belief; gender; gender reassignment; pregnancy or maternity; sexual orientation; and marital or civil partner status.

We also define as harassment behaviour which creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic. Name calling, lewd comments, excluding people, making insensitive jokes, and displaying pornographic material are all examples of harassment. Physical, verbal and non-verbal

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conduct can all amount to harassment, and this policy covers both isolated and ongoing incidents of offensive behaviour.

Harassment occurs when a person is subject to uninvited conduct which — as an intended or unintended consequence — violates their dignity in connection with a protected characteristic. It can occur in person, in writing or via electronic means including emails, texts, online messaging services or social media.

When someone treats another person less favourably because they either submit to such behaviour or refuse to do so, that can also be interpreted as harassment.

In all cases, it is the impact on the victim that matters — whether or not the perpetrator intends to harass their victim is irrelevant.

3 WHAT IS BULLYING?

We define as bullying any behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. There is no need to demonstrate a connection with a protected characteristic to establish a bullying allegation.

As with harassment, physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct can all amount to bullying. It can take various forms, from extreme behaviour involving violence and intimidation through to subtle actions such as deliberate exclusion, eg 'sending someone to Coventry'.

4 MINIMISING HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

All Friends have a responsibility to behave towards each other in a friendly and respectful manner. Elders and overseers have a particular responsibility to be aware of tensions and difficulty in interpersonal relations which may arise, and to take action to alleviate them.

5 PROCEDURE

If a Friend feels harassed or bullied, or if any other Friend perceives harassment or bullying is taking place, the following steps should be taken.

5.1 Many issues can be resolved informally. First, the perceived victim or the witness should attempt to speak to the perceived perpetrator and explain that their behaviour is unwelcome, inappropriate, or is upsetting.

5.2 If the victim or the witness does not feel sufficiently confident to approach the perpetrator, or if this approach has been made and the victimization continues, then the harassment or bullying should be reported in confidence to an overseer or elder in the LM. It is expected that LM overseers or elders will seek to resolve the matter.

5.3 If this does not resolve the matter, LM overseers or elders should report it to the clerk of AM elders & overseers. AM elders & overseers are expected to appoint one or more Friends with appropriate experience and expertise to investigate and attempt to persuade the perpetrator to desist and to introduce any supporting measures to assist in the victimization ceasing. These might include encouraging the perpetrator to seek counselling or other professional help, and insisting that the perpetrator should worship at another Meeting. At this stage, AM elders & overseers should inform the AM clerk and the clerk of trustees in confidence of the situation. Advice from Quaker Life might be sought.

5.4 If AM elders and overseers are unable to prevent the victimization recurring, the AM clerk and clerk of trustees should be informed. If the perpetrator is a member of the AM, the AM may consider recording a minute of disunity with the actions of the Friend concerned and, in exceptional circumstances, termination of membership on the grounds that the spiritual bond has been broken (*Qf&p* 11.31 and 11.33).

Protecting confidentiality

Harassment and bullying allegations can raise strong feelings and are always serious, which is why both the Area Meeting, the complainant and the person complained about have an obligation to maintain confidentiality as far as possible. This applies at every stage, including the investigation and the result.

Approved by Trustees on:

15 July 2020

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Signed

Iona Lyons

Clerk to Trustees